

Grain Mill Alley, Workshop 2, Minutes

Date & Time: September 11, 2014 at 7:00pm
Location: Depot Building, Lexington, MA
Prepared by: Kirk Hiatt, GroundView

Attendee

Melisa Tintocalis
Eden Dutcher
Kirk Hiatt
Approximately 50 Community Members

Affiliation

Director of Economic Development, Town of Lexington
Principal, GroundView (landscape architecture)
Designer, GroundView (landscape architecture)

Melisa Tintocalis began the Workshop 2 by taking the attendees to Grain Mill Alley to observe the site. After which, the group returned to the Depot Building and Ms. Tintocalis introduced the project history and outlined the project planning process.

Eden Dutcher presented a brief overview of Workshop 2 including: planning goals, site context and community feedback.

- Planning Goals
 - Enliven an underutilized space
 - Respect and create a dialog with historical context
 - Connect Main Street & Minuteman Bikeway
- Context
 - Railroad by 1850
 - Grain Mill building by 1889 (mill moved by 1912)
 - Lumber Yard by 1889
 - Hammond Residential building by 1889
 - Bank of America building by the 1970s
 - Minuteman Bikeway by 1993
- Scale Comparison
 - Grain Mill Alley: 6300sf (27'x233')
 - Emery Park: 19,500sf
 - Pedestrian Alley: 715sf (9'x77')
- Site
 - Pedestrian circulation between Bikeway and Streetscape
 - Vehicular circulation – cross travel lane for Town parking
 - Vehicular circulation – shared travel lane for bank ATM and parking
- What we heard at Workshop 1
 - Create a "Gateway"
 - Be Bike Friendly
 - Design for a unique outdoor place
 - Focus on "today," not "yesterday"
 - Allow for flexible programming
 - Provide interactive features
 - Ensure safety and accessibility

Ms. Dutcher followed by presenting two design concepts:

- General program for both concepts
 - Sense of arrival and orientation
 - Flexible venue
 - Seating, Planting, and Lighting
 - An "Alternative Transportation Node" from the Minuteman bike path
 - Informational Kiosk about downtown and "Across Lexington"
 - Water filling station
 - Bike repair station
 - Bike parking
- Concept 1
 - Directional Planting and Up-Lighting
 - Sculptural Granite Stage
 - Canopy Feature / Event Space
 - "Plug & Play" Infrastructure
 - Alternative Transportation Node
- Concept 2
 - Connective Plaza
 - Sculptural Bench
 - Water Feature / Event Space
 - Deck / Stage in Perennial Bed (rain garden to capture drainage from water feature)
 - Light Feature, Over-Head & In-Ground
 - Alternative Transportation Node

A general record of the design concept discussion is as follows:

Concept 1

- The sculptural granite stage is nice but people were concerned with safety
 - "It's too close to the road – kids might slide into traffic"
 - "Skate boarders will use it as a ramp"
- People liked the idea of the space being used for community events such as an outdoor local food festival
- People did not like the hedge because they felt it made the space feel smaller and because it cut off views from the bike path
- There were concerns that the design directs people into the bank's parking lot traffic
- The pedestrian pathways were too small and felt cramped
- Could some of the pathways be re-oriented for better pedestrian flow through the space?
- People liked the idea of the "Plug & Play" Infrastructure servicing different types of activities
- People liked the idea of having a four seasons canopy but they did not like the proposed design
 - Could be removable rather than a permanent structure?

Concept 2

- A majority of attendees expressed a preference for Concept 2 over Concept 1
- People appreciated the simple and clear connection to downtown from the bikeway
- There were mixed feelings about the water feature (some general comments)
 - "Could the water feature be a mister instead of water jets?"
 - "Is this the best spot for a water feature?"
 - "Could the water feature be more passive and sculptural?"
 - "What about people who are just walking through and don't want to get wet?"
- People thought the stage in the rain garden was too small, but appreciated that it doubled as a bench
- People wanted to know more about how the space could be used in the winter
- The community expressed interest in taking the canopy from Concept 1 and including it in Concept 2
 - People liked the idea of a canopy that could be erected and removed depending on the events and community programs
- People expressed interest in seeing more vegetation along the building facades

Following the presentation and discussion, comment sheets were handed out to the attendees and collected by Melisa Tintocalis at the conclusion of the meeting. See attached for the comprehensive record of the comment sheets.

Melisa Tintocalis concluded the meeting by sharing contact information and describing the schedule going forward. Based on Workshop 2 comments, a refined design will be developed and presented at Workshop 3, tentatively scheduled for the first week in October 2014.

End of Meeting Minutes.